

Testimony

To

The Montana State Legislature

Submitted

By

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This is in reference to House Bill 2, the Non-Beneficiary Bill for tribal college students. The non-beneficiary students are those who are not members of a federally recognized tribe. In the past Fort Belknap College averaged approximately 18 non-beneficiary students; for school year 2008-2009 we had approximately 14 non-beneficiary students; for school year 2009-2010 our numbers for non-beneficiary students were 45, an increase of 31%.

Fort Belknap College, like the other six colleges has an "open door" policy where students from the outlying areas can attend Fort Belknap College. For some of these students this is their only option, due to the distances and the trouble with bad roads in the winter. These distances can be from 50 miles to 150 miles one-way. The cost is affordable for them. We are accredited through the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The majority of our students transfer to one of the colleges under the Montana University System. Without the

help from the State of Montana, expenses have to be absorbed by the college. The only income received from non-beneficiary students are from the tuition and fees. The non-beneficiary students are eligible for all support services at the colleges and are actively involved in student organizations. In addition they are eligible for many scholarships we have.

There is a continual shortage of funding with tribal colleges as we do not receive the full amount of dollars approved by the federal government. Tribal Colleges are approved by the federal government for approximately \$8000.00 but appropriated for approximately \$5300.00 per Indian Student Count. Additional funding for our college would help defray some of the expenses we have.

In 2001 the State of Montana appropriated \$427,000.00 and in the following year, 2002 only \$96,000.00 was appropriated and by 2003, no funds were available. In May 2008, we received \$33,264; June 9, 2009, \$34,262.00; and in June 2010, we received \$44,544.00. For the fiscal year 2010, we received full funding for 14.73 students @ \$3,024.00 each.

May we continue to have your support for House Bill 2 for the full amount approved.